



GRAY DAVIS, GOVERNOR

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JEFF MORALES, DIRECTOR

ROBERT W. SASSAMAN, DISTRICT 7 DIRECTOR



Inside Seven - a District 7 Edition of the CT News

VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL HIGHWAY

Caltrans' "PCH" Honors America's Soldiers

By Margie Tirilli

On a hot July morning, on the 27th day of the month in the year 2001, Vietnam veterans gathered near the intersection of Pacific Coast Highway (PCH) and Hawthorne Boulevard in the impressive city of Torrance to salute an inscription on a green sign with white lettering that simply states:

Los Angeles County

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway

The Vietnam Veterans of America waited a long time to be recognized. And — just maybe that wait was worth it as they are now honored on a world-famous route that touches the sea for which it was named, the jewel of the Pacific, Pacific Coast Highway.

Kicking off the commemoration was an aerial tribute by the U. S. Coast Guard and the California National Guard.

The honorees and their guests converged in the parking lot of the Best Buy store for the ceremony — just below the embankment where the new sign is located.

Some veterans roared into the event on Harleys with graying ponytails carrying the Stars and Stripes and POW/MIA flags laced to the backs of their motorcycle seats. Others on foot, wore jeans and camouflage vests adorned with combat ribbons and black berets; some proudly dressed in the uniforms of their service branch and displayed medals of courage that let the audience know they were in the presence of highly decorated, distinguished soldiers — even holders of Purple Hearts; while others came directly from work dressed in business attire.

C. R. "Bob" Holmes, past Mayor of Manhattan Beach, welcomed the crowd and gave the Pledge of Allegiance which was preceded by the National Anthem and the Presentation of Colors.

Former State of California Division of Highways employee Jerry Yamamoto, who was hired by Scotty Reed (retired) to work in Design back in 1962, was the inspiration for what has now become the Los Angeles County Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway.

It all started four years ago — born during a visit home to Ohio where he saw a similar highway sign. Yamamoto, current president of Chapter 53, mentioned it to the Vietnam veterans



Los Angeles County Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway. Assemblyman George Nakano, left, and Division Of Highways retiree Jerry Yamamoto who both spearheaded the effort for the permanent remembrance to Vietnam Veterans, proudly pose near one of the many signs now placed along a 104-mile stretch of Pacific Coast Highway in Los Angeles County.

who liked the idea. Assemblyman George Nakano of Torrance, also a veteran, readily agreed to sponsor legislation that would allow the signs to be placed along PCH in Los Angeles County. Thus — with the help of the Assemblyman, HCR115 made the signing a reality.

Governor Gray Davis, a Vietnam veteran, had hoped to be in

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THE DIRECTOR'S CHAIR

By the time you read this column, many of you will have returned from your summer vacations. I hope everything went well and you have returned relaxed, refreshed and ready for another great year of valuable contributions to solving the transportation needs in Southern California. As part of your travels, I hope you had a chance to take my suggestion last month and take a look at the transportation facilities in other states and countries to see what they are doing and bring back ideas to share.

Also by the time this edition of *Inside Seven* is printed, nearly 200 employees will have relocated, or are getting ready to move, to a building on Wilshire Boulevard to help reduce the number of occupants currently at the District Office Building (DOB). An additional 400 are scheduled to begin relocating October 1 with a final move-in by Thanksgiving. That makes a total of some 600 employees relocating to a new environment, bringing with it new changes and new challenges. Working at Caltrans over many years, I have found our employees to be the most adaptable that I have ever worked with. I know we will continue to be adaptable in anticipation of our brand new DOB to be constructed on our parking lot occupying the entire block between First and Second and Main and Los Angeles Streets in the not-too-distant future.

The competition for architects to build our new DOB has received world-wide attention. This past month, three internationally-renowned architects were chosen as finalists: one from Los Angeles, one from the Netherlands and the third from Spain. Caltrans is very enthused and confident that our new 600,000-plus-square-foot building will be a state-of-the-art, world class structure inside and out. When the finalist has been selected, an update will appear in a future issue of *Inside Seven*.

Caltrans was proud to participate at a recent event where Vietnam Veterans were honored by naming the Los Angeles portion of beautiful Pacific Coast Highway "Los Angeles County Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway" (please see cover story). Spearheading the effort for a permanent remembrance to these veterans was former State of California Division of Highways employee Jerry Yamamoto (now retired). And with the leadership and sponsorship by Assemblyman George Nakano of Torrance, legislation was passed to place the signs. By dedicating this famous stretch of California highway, it honors our military in a positive and enduring way. Many thanks to Assemblyman Nakano and Jerry Yamamoto for taking the lead in this effort to remember and honor our Vietnam Veterans.

The 2000-2001 fiscal year was another very successful year for District 7 – the leader among all Districts in meeting commitments for project delivery. One of the outstanding areas was Environmental Planning whose staff completed a very high

percentage of environmental documents on time, far outdistancing any other Caltrans district. We will be working together as a team with the other districts to help make the entire Caltrans organization much more successful in all areas where we can provide assistance. Congratulations to all members of every team in each functional area for a very triumphant year as we look back with pride at our successes and forward to another proud year delivering projects on time and within budget. I am confident we will continue to meet or exceed our goals. Again, my congratulations to all for successful project delivery. (Please see Project Management Update in this issue for more information.)

I would like to take this time to commend all employees who recently participated in the American Heart Association's "Heartwalk" held in Downtown Los Angeles (see article this issue of *Inside Seven*). Kinikki Gordon from Maintenance coordinated the event where some 75 employees gathered to raise money and awareness for the American Heart Association. Many thanks to everyone who participated in this worthwhile fundraiser. In addition, this is a good time to remind people that walking, which I am a strong advocate of, is a good way to strengthen one's heart and keep fit. Just walking at a pace you're comfortable with helps strengthen the heart and helps the rest of the body to function properly. There are a lot of opportunities where we can walk, instead of taking the car. I encourage everyone to walk more whenever possible. While I was unable to attend the event this year, I am planning on attending the next one, and I hope to see you all at next year's "Heartwalk."

It is always refreshing to see the multitude of talents in the Caltrans organization beyond our individual careers. I became aware of one such extraordinary talent at the August 5 Los Angeles Dodgers vs. Chicago Cubs baseball game at Dodger Stadium. I was thrilled to hear one of our own Caltrans voices, Marieka Schrader, sing a beautiful rendition of our National Anthem, the Star Spangled Banner. Marieka's voice gave me chills and made me proud to have someone of that talent within our organization. Please see this month's "Employee Spotlight" in this edition of *Inside Seven*.

In closing I would like to extend my very best wishes for a happy retirement to my old friend from District 4, Harry Yahata, District Director, who retired August 22. I understand he has plans to travel and enjoy his retirement to the fullest. All my best to Harry and his wife for a wonderful and well-deserved retirement! •

ROBERT W. SASSAMAN
District Director

Los Angeles And Long Beach Host Women's Transportation Seminar National Conference

by Judy Gish

The Women's Transportation Seminar (WTS) Los Angeles chapter had an opportunity to present some of the nation's major transportation projects to a group of high-level transportation industry representatives and government officials at the recent WTS national conference in Long Beach.

Among those attending were California Department of Transportation (Department) Director Jeff Morales and Chief Deputy Director Tony Harris. District 7 executives included District Director Robert W. Sassaman, and Deputy District Director for Planning, Public Transportation and Local Assistance Rose Casey, President of the WTS Los Angeles Chapter.

Speaking at the conference, Morales emphasized the "unwavering commitment to transportation" by Gov. Gray Davis despite the economic slowdown. He also stressed the Department's diversity and opportunities for minorities and women. Minorities now comprise 50 percent of the workforce while women represent 25 percent. Thirty-five percent of the recent senior management appointments have been women, he added.

Morales's presence at the event and the "impressive" turn-out underscored a major purpose of the organization, Casey said—to provide intimate access to decision-makers from all areas of the transportation sector. In addition to the main presentations, conference attendees were able to participate in small roundtable discussions on current issues with a high-level transportation executive serving as the roundtable host.

Some of the topics discussed were transit and rail, goods movement, transportation and the media, transportation infrastructure and technology. Concurrent with the sessions were tours of the Alameda Corridor, the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, the MTA Red Line and the Los Angeles Department of

Transportation Automated Traffic Surveillance & Control (ATSAC).

The fact that this area was chosen to host the national conference allowed the group to pull in local leaders and highlight major projects. "It was a great opportunity to show off to the conference participants from other states," Casey said. "It was also great to see so much interest and participation by Caltrans District 7 and Headquarters staff." Casey will encourage her staff to participate more in conferences like these because they provide an important forum for networking and addressing transportation issues and developing solutions.

The WTS Los Angeles chapter also offers monthly dinner programs featuring prominent speakers from all transportation modes.

In addition to its networking functions, the WTS is also involved in community outreach efforts. For example, the Los Angeles chapter currently is participating as a partner with the Los Angeles Unified School District and the Port of Los Angeles in a program to train students for careers in international trade. To this end, an academy has been established at Banning Senior High School in

Wilmington. Paid internships and scholarships are available "as opportunities for the students in this disadvantaged area," Casey said. "It's one of the most rewarding things we do to support the youth and future of the transportation industry."

Participation in the WTS has expanded Casey's contacts beyond the Department of Transportation. She has met people from the ports, the airports, the rail and transit industry and a variety of related professions. And the organization is not limited to women; members and guests include men, who also serve on the Los Angeles Chapter Board of Directors. Every member, Casey said, is committed to "the broader goal of supporting the advancement of transportation professionals among all disciplines." •

Below right: Caltrans' Rose Casey, Los Angeles Chapter President, addresses transportation industry professionals at the WTS National Conference.

Below left: Jeff Morales emphasizes Governor Gray Davis' "unwavering commitment to transportation" at the WTS National Conference.





Equal Opportunity Corner

Caltrans Mentor Program

In 1998, Caltrans adopted Franklin High School offering its students a chance to attend Job Shadow Days as well as offering a chance for various internships. In addition, Caltrans employees offered to become mentors to students who are involved in transportation programs. This year, Caltrans was proud to volunteer 16 mentors from District 7 who were matched with 16 Franklin High School students in order to provide them with inspiration, leadership and professional guidance in their upcoming careers.

Special functions are held throughout the year, one of which was a recent Mentor Breakfast held in June. Among the topics of discussion were future aspirations and goals. "These get-togethers give Caltrans mentors an opportunity to interact with the students and offer encouragement," said Dorothy Osakwe, Equal Opportunity Officer and Mentor Program Coordinator. She said future plans include field trips to Caltrans projects, like the Route 210 project in Claremont. The mentors also keep in touch via telephone and email.

Many of the students involved in the mentoring program are the first in their families to attend college. "These students are so focused and appreciate this program so much," added Osakwe. "The mentoring experience is great for the student, but also for the mentor as well. It is a chance to pass on valuable knowledge and expertise about transportation to a student with aspirations in that field."

Other high schools in Caltrans District 7 also have transportation programs. Osakwe said that she would like to reach out to them as well, however additional mentors are needed. "We are always looking for volunteers to become part of this valuable and fulfilling program," she said. Anyone interested should please contact her at (213) 897-8494 or stop by Room 500-B. Thanks to Dorothy Osakwe and to all Caltrans mentors for being teachers and role models and making a difference to the communities Caltrans serves. •



Caltrans mentors and students from Franklin High School. Left to right back row: Student Sasha Ramirez, mentor Amanda De Jesus, student Julio Gutierrez, student Francisco A. Castaneda, student Jose Rodriguez, mentor Andres Roldan, mentor and Program Coordinator Dorothy Osakwe and mentor Khan Hossain. Left to right sitting: Students Rosalia Amaga, Evelyn Tamayo, Karen Casillas and Rosemarie Berry.



District 7 Takes Statewide Lead In Project Delivery!

"Project Management has become a reality in District 7 — there is no question about that!" Those were the proud words of Raja Mitwasi, Deputy District Director for Program and Project Management, exclaiming about the monumental success of the District's project delivery this past fiscal year of 2000/2001. Never, according to Mitwasi, had the District experienced such overwhelming accomplishments as it did delivering Caltrans transportation projects on time — and even ahead of time — and within budget. In short, delivery of the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) was delivered at 117%. And the State Highway Operations and Prevention Program (SHOPP) projects were delivered at 114%. "This proves that Project Management is alive and well and will continue to move in the right direction," added Mitwasi. "District 7 is now the statewide leader due to the strong team spirit at District 7. And all teams are working with one common goal in mind: project delivery on time and within budget."

District 7 has come a long way in these efforts. In the area of the Project Acceptance and Environmental Document (PA&ED) milestone, the District delivered over 90%, while the statewide average is about 60%. The Environmental Planning staff delivered a remarkable number of environmental documents never before achieved. In addition, other milestones ranged about 90%, while the statewide average is around 70%. Mitwasi said that Caltrans has taken project management to a whole new level. "District 7 is ranked first and our goal is to maintain this level," he said. "And we will continue to work very hard to stay the leader."

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Caltrans Joins Career Day At Saint Peter And Paul School

Career Day at Saint Peter and Paul Elementary School in Wilmington was a special occasion recently for two Caltrans staffers. Lupe Tamayo, Transportation Engineer in Operations and Suzie Torres, Special Programs Manager, both say they still talk about what exceptional students and teachers they met there recently. What's more, Tamayo grew up in Wilmington and still resides there today. "It meant a lot to me to give something back to the community where I grew up and where I still live," said Tamayo. She noted that in addition to many government agencies, local businesses participated as well, giving the students a wealth of information they can use to make future career decisions. "The kids were well-mannered and outstanding in every way. It was a truly special experience."

A letter received by the school thanked Caltrans for "enriching their students." But according to Torres and Tamayo, they themselves were also enriched by the positive experience. "It was a sincere pleasure to be part of Career Day at Saint Peter and Paul," said Torres. "The experience and interaction with these students was truly a highlight in our community outreach efforts. The students were exceptionally polite and kind. It was a genuine pleasure for us to participate at their Career Day."

Thanks to the faculty and students at Saint Peter and Paul School for the invitation to share and be part of their special day. Caltrans is indeed fortunate and proud to be part of community outreach efforts where the future of California's students is paramount. Many thanks to Suzie Torres and Lupe Tamayo for their ongoing efforts in supporting community education. •



Career Day at Saint Peter and Paul School. Suzie Torres, left and Lupe Tamayo take part in educating students about Caltrans.

Caltrans Raises Thousands Of Dollars At "HEARTWALK"

By Judy Gish

Caltrans District 7 employees raised nearly \$5,000 for heart disease at the American Heart Association's "Heartwalk" walkathon on May 31.

The 5K walk, sponsored by Good Samaritan Hospital, attracted some 2,500 participants and raised \$300,000 overall. The purpose of the event is to focus attention on the disease. "The money that's raised is used for research, outreach and education," said Kinikki Gordon, event coordinator and Maintenance Equipment Operator with the Aviation road crew.

Starting at ARCO Plaza, the circular route took about 45 minutes to complete. Caltrans participants, largely from the Maintenance and Landscaping divisions, ranged in age from one year (pulled in a wagon) to 70-plus. Some of the walkers won gifts, ranging from a stereo and a radio to t-shirts and tote bags.

Gordon called the event a morale-booster. "Everyone finished and we all had a great time," she said. Caltrans thanks Kinikki for her efforts and everyone who participated. The annual event will take place again next May and information will be provided via email and silent radio in order to gain additional participation for this worthwhile and fun event. For additional information, please contact Kinikki Gordon at (310) 342-6158. •



"Heartwalk" participants from Caltrans gather in Downtown Los Angeles to raise thousands for the American Heart Association.

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

A "Star Spangled" Banner Day For Caltrans Singer

August 5, 2001 was a "star spangled" banner day in the life of Caltrans Environmental Planner, Marieka Schrader. Schrader experienced the chance of a lifetime and sang the National Anthem at Dodger Stadium – the first time ever singing it public for the former music major.

It all started when co-worker and Environmental Planner Barb Marquez heard that Caltrans was looking for an employee to sing the Star Spangled Banner at Caltrans Night at Dodger Stadium where the Los Angeles Dodgers would be playing against the Chicago Cubs. Marquez encouraged Schrader to audition. Two weeks before the game, Schrader took Marquez up on her idea and sang the National Anthem solo in front of three panelists at Dodger Stadium without music. The letter she subsequently received said she was the chosen one!

Her first time "at bat" in front of such a huge audience was a milestone event for Schrader. Not only was the game televised, but it was Schrader's very first time at a professional baseball game ever. "I went big the first time!" she said. "I told myself not to be nervous. And it was an amazing experience and also a lot of fun." Schrader was given four box-seat tickets and her parents traveled from Davis for the exciting event.

Schrader said she sang in musical theater in high school as well as college, where she majored in music for three years before changing her major to Environmental Planning at the University of California at Santa Cruz. She graduated in December 1999 before relocating to Southern California and hiring on with Caltrans. She said her idol is Judy Garland and she hopes something positive will come from her wonderful experience singing at Dodger Stadium. "I would like to thank Barb Marquez for encouraging me to audition," said Schrader. "And I would also like to extend my appreciation to everyone in Environmental Planning for all their support."

Best of luck to Marieka Schrader, who really "went to bat" in a big way at Dodger Stadium! •



Caltrans singer Marieka Schrader sings National Anthem at Dodger Stadium.

Vietnam Memorial

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attendance, but was unable to be present because of a scheduling conflict. However, the event was so important to him, he sent three representatives from his office. One, John Farkas, presented a proclamation on behalf of Governor Davis to Jerry Yamamoto and Assemblyman Nakano declaring — "July 27, 2001 Vietnam Veterans Memorial Day in the State of California." Farkas said this recognizes the sacrifices of Vietnam veterans 365 days a year.

Keynote speaker, U. S. Army Captain (Ret.) Vincent Okamoto now a successful attorney, gave an eloquent and moving speech recounting a little of what it was like to be an American soldier in Vietnam, and the shame they were made to feel when they returned home. At the end of his speech, Capt. Okamoto received a standing ovation from the crowd of 200 plus.

Assemblyman Nakano also drew applause when he said that Gov. Davis provided funding for a Vietnam Veterans Wall to be erected by Torrance's City Hall.

The Assemblyman went on to thank the California Department of Transportation's District 7 Deputy of Operations Frank Quon for his efforts in helping him make this day possible.

Quon said that Yunus Ghausi, Senior Traffic Engineer was instrumental in making this come alive for the veterans. Ghausi managed the project for the district and was acknowledged by many of these former soldiers for the help he provided that led up to this day. Other Traffic staff important to the project were Azadeh Bahar, Marie White, Payam Bozorgchami and Mario Dimen along with Karl Berger of Environmental Planning.

Maintenance staff involved in the project under Ron Thrash of Special Crews included Raul Caban, Gilberto Moreno and Ed Robles who were responsible for erecting the 9' x 3.5' signs which were paid for by the Vietnam Veterans of America's South Bay Chapter 53 and private donations. Total cost of the signs was \$7,500.

In addition to the PCH/Hawthorne

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Project Delivery

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Mitwasi said there are many reasons why District 7 is on top. "We have the team spirit, the knowledge, the expertise, the motivation, the personnel, the right tools and the support of upper management," explained Mitwasi proudly. "We have it all!"

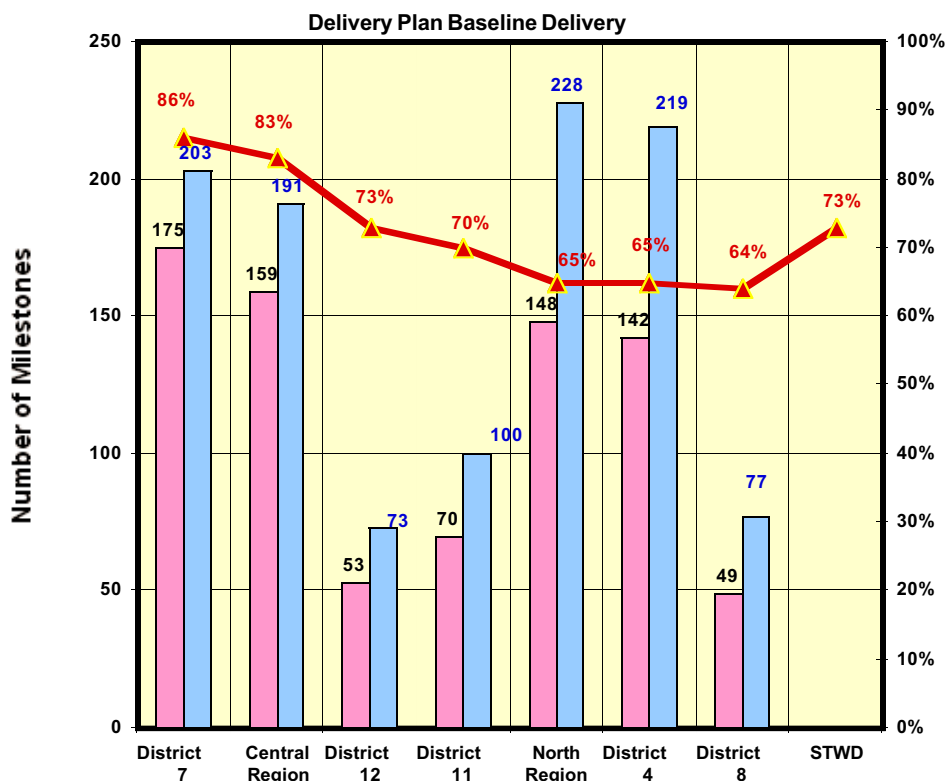
The District is also taking the lead in supporting other Caltrans districts who have asked for assistance regarding tools and methods it takes for achieving success. "We are ready, willing and able to lend our support and assistance to the entire Caltrans organization statewide," added Mitwasi. "And I want to thank all functional managers, Headquarters reviewers, Headquarters Office Engineering, the Federal Highway Administration, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and the Ventura County Transportation Commission for their continued support and teamwork."

"Teamwork!" concluded Mitwasi. "Caltrans teamwork gets the job done!" •

PROJECT DELIVERY MAJOR MILESTONES SUMMARY

Baseline Delivery (%)
FY 2000/2001

Milestone	District 7	Central Region	District 12	District 11	North Region	District 4	District 8	STWD
PA&ED	92%	78%	82%	53%	48%	55%	40%	65%
R/W Cert.	89%	79%	79%	79%	67%	73%	65%	76%
RTL	86%	85%	79%	88%	65%	66%	82%	76%
CCA	77%	91%	61%	65%	84%	66%	89%	76%
# Delivered	175	159	53	70	148	142	49	
#Planned	203	191	73	100	228	219	77	
CONSOLIDATED	86%	83%	73%	70%	65%	65%	64%	73%
RANK	1	2	3	4	5.5	5.5	7	



Vietnam Memorial

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Boulevard sign in Torrance, the remainder are located at PCH south of Channel Drive facing northbound traffic in Long Beach; southbound Lincoln Boulevard north of the Marina del Rey Freeway; and PCH north of Decker Canyon Road facing southbound traffic in Malibu. All are in Los Angeles County.

Steve Devorkin of District 7's Graphic Arts, photographer extraordinaire, took pictures and provided and operated the Department's sound system for the event. Charlotte Shinn-Henry of the district's Public Information office also provided assistance.

Throughout the ceremony, the 300th Army Marching Band played tunes attributed to each of the five military branches. Rounding out the musical tribute, a lone piper played Amazing Grace.

Also in attendance were members of the California Highway Patrol who saluted when the U. S. and POW/MIA flags passed their way.

The California Department of Transportation proudly salutes its own Vietnam veteran employees, and all its other veterans, for their distinguished military service and continuing contributions in helping the Department manage and efficiently operate its freeway network.

In closing, Capt. Okamoto spoke poignantly about a dying American soldier who was riddled with bullets. He said in part, "...since it was apparent he wasn't going to make it, members of his unit gathered around him so he wouldn't die alone. One asked him if he wanted a cigarette; he said no. Another offered him a drink, but again he said no. Then a third asked him if there was anything he wanted. The dying soldier said yes — 'Remember me.'"

Today — Jerry Yamamoto and Assemblyman Nakano along with the Vietnam Veterans of America and friends who supported the signs — made that wish come true.

As these veterans from all walks of life gathered in front of their sign, Paul Verner of Chapter 53 raised his bugle and filled the air with the haunting sounds of Taps. •

What's **Cookin' At Caltrans**

SUMMER JELLO PIE

From *Caltrans retiree Harold Yamamoto*

- 1 cup hot water
- 3 ounces orange-flavored Jello
- 8 ounces Cool Whip
- 8 ounces tofu
- 1 pie crust, baked
- 1 small can crushed pineapple or Mandarin oranges, drained

Dissolve Jello in hot water and cool. Add Cool Whip and tofu and mix. Add fruit. Pour into pie crust. Refrigerate until firm. (For firmer consistency, add 1 envelope gelatin to mixture).



VERY BERRY SUMMER COBBLER

From the *Oregon Raspberry and Blackberry Commission*

- 5 cups berries (any combination of raspberries, blackberries, sliced strawberries, blueberries or boysenberries)
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon flour
- Optional splash of lemon

Dough:

- 1-1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 4 tablespoons chilled unsalted butter
- 1 cup buttermilk

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. In 10 to 12-inch pie plate or 2-quart baking dish, mix together berries, sugar, flour and lemon juice. Bake berries for 30 minutes stirring once during baking. After 30 minutes remove berries and make dough as follows. In medium bowl stir together dry ingredients. Cut in butter with mixer or by hand. Stir in buttermilk until thoroughly moistened. With large spoon, drop six large mounds of dough over fruit. Brush with egg wash if desired. Bake 20 minutes.



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